

even be advantage in reading his own exposition of it in his last volume, *Le Temps Retrouve II* before, or immediately after, the two first, *Du Cotede Chez Swann*. But it becomes easier to understand his philosophy with some knowledge also of his life.

At nine the little Marcel was attacked by that asthma which was to overshadow him more and more to the end. By fifteen, he had charmed open the doors of Parisian society. Further, he was the delicate and adoring child of a perhaps too devoted mother. Consequently, as a frail and feminine being in a fastidious, yet pitiless world, he came to learn that for those who value affection and kindness there could be no wilderness lonelier than this high society. As he grew older, with worsening health he became more and more a hermit; lurking in a cloud of fumigations by day and stealing out, if ever, by night like some shy moth into the lighted brilliance of the Ritz, So a second, material loneliness was added to the loneliness of the spirit. And as this solitary Stylite sat there on his column encircled by the desert of life, he felt the swift 1 moments slipping like sand between his fingers; and felt them, even as they slipped, barren and arid as the desert-sand. It is strange that both he and his one equal in stature in contemporary England, Hardy, should have shared this obsession with the passage of time, this haunted pre-occupation with the irrecoverable past.

But for
Proust even the present had become not
only fugitive,
but futile. He could value nothing except
what his
imagination had first touched to gold; and his
imagination
could only gild, not present things, but those
beyond his
reach* The consolations of others dupe him
no longer.
Friendship, like society, has become in his
eyes a hollow
fraud—as well conduct a dialogue with a
chair. Friend-
ship, indeed, is worse than empty; it is
pernicious. It